The history of the garden

Villa Thuret has been a research site dedicated to botany and acclimatization since 1857. Created by Gustave Thuret, a botanist and specialist in algal biology, it was the first privately funded research laboratory to be set up in France. Gustave Thuret carried out systematic acclimatization research to be set up in France. Gustave Thuret carried out systematic acclimatization research to be set up in France. Gustave Thuret carried out systematic acclimatization research to be set up in France.

Villa Thuret

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Villa Thuret experimental unit of the French National Research Institute for Agriculture, Food and Environment (INRAE).

A garden recognised and accredited

The French Ministry of Culture classified this garden as a "Jardin remarquable" (remarkable garden) in 2007. A number of the trees it contains were awarded the status of "Arbre remarquable" (remarkable tree) by the ARBRES association in 2015. In 2017, the garden was labelled "Jardin botanique de France" (Botanical Garden of France). In 2018, the garden and its villa are labelled "Maison des Illustrés" by the Ministry of Culture.

Original maintenance techniques

The plants are allowed to develop freely and to acclimatize to their environment. Pruning is rare and carried out only to ensure the safety of the public. Watering is restricted to the first few years after planting, to help the trees to become established. Wild grasses serve as ground cover, protecting the soil from erosion. The loof and back litter is also left in place. Cutting takes place late in spring, to allow the wild flowers to reproduce naturally. Rather than a uniform layer of grass, these techniques yield a mosaic that changes during the course of the year: grass, ferns, flowers, in the spring and autumn and dry during the summer.

In 1878, Villa Thuret was donated to the French state. It is now permanently affiliated to a higher education and research establishment. The entire site, including the research laboratories and the collections (herbarium, library, botanic garden) is currently managed by the French National Research Institute for Agriculture, Food and Environment (INRAE). The history of the garden

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The remarkable trees of the garden

Most of the trees at Villa Thuret are exceptional. The most important have been awarded the status of "Arbre remarquable", based on a set of criteria relating to age, their dimensions, habitat, aesthetic qualities, rarity or protected species status. A trail, shown opposite, has been created to bring visitors into contact with these unique living organisms that defy time and lift their crowns to the heavens. The principal criteria used to select these trees are as follows:

Rare or protected: species figuring on the lists of the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) or the CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Wild Species of Flora and Fauna) or the Washington Convention.

Historic: trees that are more than a hundred years old. Some trees are rare, protected and historic at the same time.

Discovery road

01. Pinus halepensis
02. Larrea tridentata
03. Euphorbia rigida
04. Brachia edulis
05. Eucalyptus antipolitensis
06. Cupressus macrocarpa
07. Pittosporum procerum
08. Agathis robusta
09. Cupressus sempervirens
10. Taxodium mucronatum
11. Araucaria bidwillii
12. Croton x antipolitensis
13. Cupressus sempervirens
14. Eucalyptus kartzoffiana
15. Taxodium mucronatum
16. Cupressus sempervirens
17. Pinus pinea
18. Cupressus sempervirens
19. Cupressus sempervirens
20. Cupressus sempervirens
21. Cupressus sempervirens
22. Cupressus sempervirens
23. Cupressus sempervirens
24. Cupressus sempervirens
25. Cupressus sempervirens
26. Cupressus sempervirens
27. Cupressus sempervirens
28. Cupressus sempervirens
29. Cupressus sempervirens
30. Cupressus sempervirens
31. Cupressus sempervirens

The collections: a living heritage and biological resources for the future

The collections of the botanic garden comprise 2500 trees and bushes from more than a thousand species, 150 botanic families and 450 genera. These plants, which originate from 390 major regions around the world, are all adapted to the Mediterranean climate. They were introduced in conditions respecting the conservation of both species and their natural regulations. The database of the Villa Thuret garden is used to manage all the available information about these plants and supplies data to other national databases, including that of the INRAE arbor network.

A programme to renovate the collections through thinned planted areas took place between 1980 and 1996. Each year, new species are introduced, followed and studied, according to predefined protocols.

Some remarkable trees are:

- **Arbutus canariensis**: Evergreen conifer is also known as “ Mexican white pine”. This fast-growing and drought tolerant species is native from Central America. Its local name is “ cedro blanco “. This genus is vulnerable and is recognised like an hybrid between C. lasiocarpa and C. torulosa.

- **Cupressus sempervirens**: This tree, which is one and a half century old, is the largest and most symbolic tree in the garden.

- **Pinus halepensis**: The Canvey cypress flowers right through the winter and looses its red bark at the end of the spring.

- **Cupressus sempervirens**: This tree is dedicated to the town of Antibes.

- **Eucalyptus regnans**: This tree, which is one and a half century old, is the largest and most symbolic tree in the garden.

Environmental data

- **Area**: 3.5 ha
- **Geographical Coordinates (La Garoupe lighthouse)**: 43°33'51''N, 07°08'01''E
- **Altitude**: 20 to 40 m
- **Soil**: clay derived from decomposition of basic lava (augitic andesite). Deep, non-calcareous soil, poor in organic matter, rich in minerals; pH between 7 and 8.5.

Historic: specimen remarkable in terms of its age, dimensions or history.

2023